· AUSTRALIA $1.50 · CANADA $1.00 · FRANCE 1.00 EURO · NEW ZEALAND $1.50 · SWEDEN KR10 · UK £.50 · U.S. $1.00

THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 36 SEPTEMBER 15, 2008

INSIDE

Obama, McCain joust over who would be best 'war president'

—PAGE 3

Hurricane response shows gov't contempt for workers

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

HOUSTON, September 2—Hours after Hurricane Gustav hit the Gulf Coast about 70 miles southwest of New Orleans, Democratic and Republican politicians were congratulating themselves at having "dodged a bullet." The storm passed without a collapse of the levees as happened during Hurricane Katrina in 2005. But the experience of working people remained unchanged from the callous government indifference they experienced three years ago.

Under the pressure of thousands of working people trying to return to their homes, New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin reversed an earlier decision to block their return and lifted police checkpoints into the city.

Not wanting to risk a repeat of the Katrina scandal, where more than 1,700 people died because of government inaction, city officials offered some access to buses, trains, and planes this time. Most people had little information about where they would be sent. They were just ordered to get out of town. Those who hesitated were threatened and bullied. Nagin announced a "dusk-to-dawn" curfew, warning that anyone who stepped outside their homes during these hours would be subject to arrest.

Anybody caught looting in New

Continued on page 7

N.Y. concert part of broad campaign to free the Cuban 5

BY BEN JOYCE

Supporters of five Cuban revolutionaries unjustly held in U.S. jails are gearing up for a September 13 benefit concert in the Bronx, New York.

The concert is part of a weekend of events that will kick off an international campaign of increased activity to promote the case of the Cuban Five and win support for their freedom.

Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero have been imprisoned for 10 years on frame-up "conspiracy" charges.

The international campaign begins September 13, the day after the five were arrested in 1998, and will end on October 8, the anniversary of the death of the Argentine-born Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara in 1967.

The concert will be held at Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture at 450 Grand Concourse at 149th Street in the Bronx. Among the top flight cast of artists participating in the lineup will be Danny Rivera of Puerto Rico,

Continued on page 3

The International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5
www.thecuban5.org
in collaboration with
The Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture
Presents

Saturday, September 13 • 7:30 p.m.
Bronx, New York
Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture
450 Grand Concourse at 149th St.
(2, 4, or 5 train to 149th St.)
Admission: $35 – VIP $100
(718) 518-4455

Participating artists:
DANNY RIVERA "La Voz de Puerto Rico"
Singer-songwriter VICTOR VICTOR
PUERTO RICAN GOLDEN JAZZ ALL STARS
Featuring Eric Figueroa, Endel Dueño, Ramón Vázquez, Ritchie Flores, and Alfredo De La Fe.
Plus special guest Danny Glover.

Moscow builds bases in Georgian regions

Moves to 'absorb' South Ossetia

Reuters/Vasily Fedosenko

Russian soldiers stand guard at military post as nearby demonstrators protest occupation of Georgia September 1 outside the Georgian city of Poti.

BY CINDY JAQUITH

September 3—Moscow took another step toward reasserting its domination of Georgia with the August 29 announcement that Russia will "absorb" the region of South Ossetia, a part of Georgian territory, and establish military bases there and in Abkhazia, another Georgian region.

The move followed the Russian government's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as "independent" states August 26. Three days later, after meetings between Russian president Dimitry Medvedev and South Ossetian president Eduard Kokoity, Kokoity announced that South Ossetia will unite with North Ossetia, which is part of Russia.

"Soon there will be no North or South Ossetia. There will be a united Alania [Ossetia] as part of Russia," Kokoity said. "We will live in one united Russian state."

South Ossetia and Abkhazia declared "independence" following the August 8 Russian invasion of Georgia that left Moscow's troops occupying major portions of that country. Moscow claimed it acted to defend the rights of South Ossetians and Abkhaz from Georgian attack, but evidence continues to surface that the invasion

Continued on page 4

Workers in Mississippi protest ICE factory raid

BY SUSAN LAMONT AND CLAY DENNISON

LAUREL, Mississippi—More than 50 workers held silent protests outside the gates of the Howard Industries plant August 28 and 29, demanding the company turn over paychecks owed to some 595 workers arrested August 25 in a massive immigration raid at the company's plant here.

Workers organized the protest with help from the Mississippi Immigrants' Rights Alliance, which is aiding with legal defense for the workers and assistance for their families. The group says the protests will continue until workers get their checks.

The company released some checks the first day. However, when workers returned August 29 signs were posted

Continued on page 7

SWP approved to be on ballot in Minnesota

BY TONY LANE

ST PAUL, Minnesota—The Socialist Workers Party ticket of Róger Calero for U.S. president and Alyson Kennedy for vice president was approved for the ballot in Minnesota September 2. That puts the Socialist Workers campaign on the

Continued on page 9

Also Inside:

Cuban people respond to category 4 hurricane 4

UK rulers move to cut back social safety net for workers 4

Pennsylvania meeting counters rightist protest 5

10th U.S. bank fails this year 5

Court upholds the right to abortion in Mexico city

Pro-choice activists demonstrate before Mexico City government passed a law in April 2007 legalizing abortion in the city during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. The legislation was upheld August 28 by the Supreme Court. Signs read, "Vote for the right to choose."

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Mexico's Supreme Court August 28 upheld women's right to abortion in Mexico City, the nation's capital, in an 8-3 decision. "This is an incredible victory for women in Mexico and for women across Latin America," said Lilian Supúlveda, legal adviser to the Center for Reproductive Rights.

The ruling was in response to a legal challenge to the city's abortion law filed by the federal government, with backing from the Roman Catholic Church and antiabortion groups.

In April 2007 the Mexico City government passed a law legalizing abortion for women who are up to 12 weeks pregnant and making it available to all women who asked for one. Since that time 12 public hospitals and clinics in the capital have performed more than 12,000 free abortions. Throughout the rest of Mexico abortion is illegal except in cases of rape, incest, or risks to the mother's life.

"To affirm that there is an absolute constitutional protection of life in gestation would lead to the violation of the fundamental rights of women," stated Justice Sergio Valls in explaining his vote to uphold the abortion law.

This ruling "is very significant for the possibility of continuing this trend in other states in the republic," stated María Consuelo Mejía, director of Mexico's Catholics for the Right to Decide, according to the *New York Times*.

Cuba and Guyana are the only countries in Latin America to allow abortions in the first trimester. The Nicaraguan government voted in November 2006 to ban abortions in all cases. El Salvador and Chile also have very restrictive laws.

Tainted food kills 12 in Canada as gov't cuts back on food safety

BY ROSEMARY RAY

HAMILTON, Ontario—An outbreak of the food bacteria listeria has killed as many as 12 people across Canada. There are now 29 confirmed cases, and 36 other suspected cases of the illness.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Public Health Agency of Canada have confirmed that the outbreak originated from infected production lines at the Maple Leaf Foods deli-meat plant here. Maple Leaf Foods, Canada's largest food processing company, recalled more than 1 million pounds of deli meat, including 220 different products it had shipped across the country. The contaminated plant, which has 250 workers, was shut down so that crews, under CFIA supervision, could clean and sanitize the plant.

The infected deli meat was supplied to McDonald's and Mr. Sub restaurants, as well as supermarkets, nursing homes, and hospitals.

Listeria is a food-borne bacterium to which older people and those with weakened immune systems are particularly vulnerable. Most of those that have died from eating this meat have been over 50 years of age. Pregnant women who are infected are also at risk as listeria can result in stillborn or acutely ill babies

"When you cut corners with sanitation this is what happens," Fatima Rombeiro, a scale operator in the cut department at Maple Leaf Pork, told the *Militant.*

The listeria crisis takes place as the federal government is preparing job cuts of food inspectors. A leaked document that is currently being discussed by the Canadian parliament's agricultural committee outlines a plan to save money by shifting CFIA meat inspectors to an oversight role and allowing the food industry to implement its own food safety programs.

Canada's agriculture minister Gerry Ritz publicly warned a CFIA biologist that he could "face charges" for leaking the document. The biologist, Luc Pomerleau, is a member of the Professional Institute of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, one of the largest unions in the country. He was fired for having sent the document, which is available on the CFIA internal server, to his union.

Pomerleau has defended his actions because of the impact that the proposed government cuts would have on inspection jobs and public policy. He is confident that a grievance through his union will win his job back.

Michèle Demers, president of the union's Professional Institute, has called for a public inquiry into food inspection in Canada. Demers said inspection needs to happen before food gets to the store shelves and these "audits aren't being made" because CFIA is "too short-staffed."

Rosemary Ray is a member of the United Food and Commerical Workers union at the Maple Leaf Pork plant in Burlington, Ontario. Annette Kouri, a member of UFCW at Ecolait in La Plaine, Quebec, contributed to this article.

Worker at Maple Leaf meat plant sanitizes equipment August 21 after tainted food from the plant killed 12 people in Canada resulting in a recall of more than 1 million pounds of meat.

THE MILITANT

New Orleans: social disaster, not natural

The 'Militant' exposes the real character of the unnecessary social disasters caused by capitalist greed that unfold in the wake of natural phenomena. Follow the 'Militant' for a working-class perspective on this question and more!

Workers try to keep an elderly woman alive outside New Orleans Convention Center, Sept. 1, 2005.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

NEW READERS

❑ $5 for 12 issues

RENEWAL

❑ $10 for 12 weeks

❑ $20 for 6 months

❑ $35 for 1 year

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

UNION/SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION PHONE

CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT,
306 W. 37TH ST., 10TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10018.

12 weeks of the Militant outside the U.S.: Australia and the Pacific, A$8 • United Kingdom, £3 • Canada, Can$6 • Caribbean and Latin America, US$10 • Continental Europe, £9 • France, 12 Euros • New Zealand, NZ$7 • Sweden, Kr60 • All other areas, US$16 (Send payment to addresses listed in business information box)

The Militant

Vol. 72/No. 36

Closing news date: September 3, 2008

Editor: Cindy Jaquith

Business Manager: Angel Lariscy

Washington correspondent: Sam Manuel

Editorial volunteers: Róger Calero, Ved Dookhun, Seth Galinsky, Ben Joyce, Martín Koppel, Doug Nelson, Ben O'Shaughnessy

Published weekly except for one week in January and one week in July.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. **Telephone:** (212) 244-4899
Fax: (212) 244-4947

E-mail: themilitant@mac.com

Web site: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States: for one-year send $35 to above address.

Latin America, Caribbean: for one-year subscription send $65, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above address.

Africa, Asia, and the Middle East: Send $65 drawn on a U.S. bank to above address.

Canada: Send Canadian $45 for one-year subscription to the Militant, 7105 St. Hubert, Suite 106F, Montreal, Quebec. H2S 2N1.

United Kingdom: £25 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London, First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green (Entrance in Brick Lane), London, E2 6DG, England.

Republic of Ireland and Continental Europe: £50 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London at above address.

France: Send 76 euros for one-year subscription to Diffusion du Militant, P.O. Box 175, 23 rue Lecourbe, 75015 Paris.

Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark: Send 400 Swedish kronor for one year to Bildhuggarvägen 17, 12144 Johanneshov, Stockholm, Sweden.

New Zealand: Send NZ$50 to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand.

Australia: Send A$50 to P.O. Box 164 Campsie, NSW 2194, Australia.

Pacific Islands: Send NZ$50 to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant's views. These are expressed in editorials.

McCain, Obama contend for commander in chief

BY SETH GALINSKY

As the U.S. presidential race heats up, Democrat Barack Obama and Republican John McCain, the main capitalist candidates, continue to argue over which would do a better job as commander in chief and in defending the interests of the U.S. ruling rich at home and abroad. Each seeks to portray himself as the candidate of "change" and best defender of family, faith, and country.

In his speech to the Democratic Party national convention, Obama made it clear if he is elected U.S. president he will escalate the war on "terror," especially in Afghanistan and along the Pakistan border.

"John McCain likes to say that he'll follow [Osama] bin Laden to the Gates of Hell," Obama said, "but he won't even go to the cave where he lives."

While Obama attacked the Republican candidate for promoting a philosophy of "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps—even if you don't have boots"—his proposals show that he, like McCain, plans to go after the social wage won by working people in the historic union battles of the 1930s and the two-decades-long fight for Black rights beginning in the late 1950s.

The Democratic nominee put forward a nationalist approach of looking out for "American" workers. He said he would give tax breaks to "companies that create good jobs right here in America," not to those that ship jobs "overseas."

"Ours is a promise that says government cannot solve all our problems," Obama said. "But what it should do is that which we cannot do for ourselves."

Obama gave an insight into what he meant in an interview at Orange County's Saddleback Church the week before the convention.

Asked by Pastor Rick Warren what position he held in the past that he saw differently today, Obama said he had made a mistake in opposing then-president William Clinton's plans "to end welfare as we know it," which kicked hundreds of thousands off the welfare rolls.

Obama said it "worked better than I think a lot of people anticipated."

In 1996 Clinton signed a new welfare law that ended federal guarantees of cash assistance for children of working people thrown into poverty, put a five-year lifetime limit on receiving welfare, required adults to get a job after two years or lose benefits, and denied most benefits—including food stamps—to anyone who is not a U.S. citizen.

While Obama says he is for a woman's right to choose abortion, during his convention speech in Denver he said that those who are for that right and those who are against it should come to agreement on "reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies in this country."

Obama stakes out the 'center'

A July 10 article in the *Los Angeles Times* titled "Democrats take Obama shift in stride," reported that "a chorus of anger and disappointment has arisen" from the left-wing of the Democratic Party over a perceived move to the "center" by Obama, although it calls the reaction "notably mild."

The article points to Obama's vote in the U.S. Senate to give legal immunity to phone companies that took part in warrantless wiretapping of their customers after Sept. 11, 2001—a reversal of a previous pledge to oppose it—along with his support to overturning the District of Columbia's handgun ban, support for public funding of social programs run by religious groups, and his at least half-decade-long support for the death penalty in "heinous" cases.

In recent months, Obama has also made more explicit that as president he would not immediately withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq.

His positions are "not something new," Obama said, pointing to numerous statements he has made both on being "careful" in withdrawing from Iraq and on shifting responsibility to individual families and away from government aid programs.

The week before the Democratic convention, Obama selected Sen. Joseph Biden as his running mate. A six-term senator from Delaware, Biden in 2001 voted to authorize the war against Iraq, unlike Obama who says he would have voted against it.

McCain: Republicans for 'change'

In a move designed to paint his as the campaign of "change" and "reform," McCain announced his pick of Alaska governor Sarah Palin as

Continued on page 8

Somali Swedes assess fight against frame-up

BY MAGNUS LUNDGREN AND DANIEL NORDSTRÖM

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Two leaders of the Somali Peace and Development Organization spoke at a Militant Labor Forum here August 16 on the successful fight to free Omar Muhammad Ali, 38, and Yassin Muhammad Ali, 42, who were detained for almost four months on charges of supporting terrorism.

"When Omar and Yassin were arrested February 28 we first asked each other what we had done and why we were attacked when we only sought safety in Sweden," said Ali Abdi who had helped organize the fight to free the two men.

Speaking at the forum, Omar Muhammad Ali explained that after a late shift working as a taxi driver he and his family were woken up by around 20 heavily armed policemen from the National Security Force who stormed his apartment. He said his arrest was part of a sweeping attack against the Somali community in which the Swedish security police interrogated more than 100 people. The police raided *hawalas*, Somali money transferring agencies; taxi operators; and others.

Muhammad Ali was kept in a cell without a toilet 23 and a half hours a day. He had a half-hour break in a corridor with only the roof open.

Militant/Ola Nordin

Omar Mohammad Ali (left) and Ali Abdi (at podium) speaking at August 16 Militant Labor Forum in Stockholm, Sweden. Muhammad Ali was one of two Somali's accused of supporting "terrorism" and detained on February 28. Ali Abdi helped fight for their release.

Hundreds gathered outside the court in several protests organized after a public meeting of the Somali Peace and Development Organization, which was formed after the U.S.-supported Ethiopian invasion of Somalia

The two prisoners were released from detention June 13. The district attorney of Stockholm is expected to make a decision August 30 on whether to press charges against them.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

FLORIDA
Miami

Free Sami Al-Arian, a Supporter of Palestinian Self-Determination Imprisoned in the U.S. Speaker: Ellen Brickley, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Sept. 12, 7 p.m., dinner; 8 p.m., *6777 NW 7th Avenue, Suite 5. Tel: (305) 757-8869.*

ILLINOIS
Chicago

The Fight for Equal Education: Desegregate the Schools! Speaker: John Hawkins, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress, 1st C.D. Fri., Sept. 12, 7 p.m., dinner; 8 p.m., program. *3557 S Archer Ave., across from 35th/Archer Orange line stop. Tel.: (773) 890-1190.*

NEW ZEALAND
Auckland

Oppose Stepped-Up Imperialist Offensive in Afghanistan/Pakistan. Speaker: Terry Coggan, Communist League. Fri., Sept. 12, 7 p.m. Donation $3. *Suite 3, 7 Mason Ave, Otahuhu. Upstairs, above laundromat. Tel.: (09) 276-8885.*

—CALENDAR—

MASSACHUSETTS
Boston

March and Rally to Support the Cuban Five. Fri., Sept. 12, 4 p.m. *Meet at downtown crossing T stop at Washington & Winter streets. Tel.: (617) 522-9478.*

Free the Cuban Five!

From left to right: Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, and René González

March and rally to protest the 10th year of incarceration and demand the release of the Cuban Five

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Saturday, September 13

Malcolm X Park 10 a.m.; 12 p.m march; 2:30 rally at SEIU Building, 1800 Massachusetts Ave. NW, 1st floor

freethefive.org • freethecuban5.com • nyfreethefive.org
New York: (917) 887-8710 • Washington: (202) 340-5623
Detroit: (313) 387-9285

Cuban Five actions

Continued from front page

Víctor Víctor of the Dominican Republic, the Puerto Rican Golden Jazz All Stars, as well as actor Danny Glover. The program begins at 7:30 p.m. For more information, call (718) 518-4455.

Cuban jazz musician and staunch opponent of the Cuban Revolution, Paquito D'Rivera, issued a statement August 21, which was picked up in the Spanish-language media and several right-wing blogs. D'Rivera calls on artists to protest what he calls a concert for "Cuban spies." The statement boasts about his role in pressuring Cuban musician Chuchito Valdés to withdraw from the lineup, and sharply criticizes Puerto Rican singer Danny Rivera for participating.

The five Cubans are accused of "conspiracy to commit espionage" as well as other charges, including in the case of Hernández "conspiracy to commit murder." They were arrested in 1998 after the FBI repeatedly broke into their homes and conducted electronic surveillance, eventually arresting them on "conspiracy" charges because they couldn't find any evidence. They were then railroaded to prison where they spent 17 months in solitary confinement and many more months without bail before going to trial. The five were convicted and received severe sentences ranging from 15 years to a double-life term.

The campaign also includes a September 13 national demonstration in Washington, D.C., to demand release of the Cuban Five. It is being organized by a coalition of groups that defend them. The rally begins at 10:00 a.m. in Malcolm X Park at 15th Street and Euclid Avenue NW, followed by a march to the White House at noon, and an indoor rally at 2:30 p.m. at the Service Employees International Union building at 1800 Massachusetts Avenue NW.

On Friday, September 12 a demonstration in support of the Cuban Five will take place in Boston. Participants will meet at the Downtown Crossing T stop beginning at 4:00 p.m. For more information, call (617) 522-9478.

Cuban people respond to category 4 hurricane

BY BEN JOYCE

In the wake of Hurricane Gustav, 94 people died in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica. In Cuba, where some 250,000 people were evacuated in the days leading up to the storm, there were no casualties.

The storm reached category 4 by the time it arrived in Cuba with wind gusts reaching a record 212 miles per hour.

The response of the Cuban government to Hurricane Gustav is typical of the preventative measures usually taken in preparation for this kind of storm. In 1998 four people died in Cuba as a result of Hurricane Georges, which killed 600 people elsewhere. In August 2004 Hurricane Charley killed four people in Cuba and 27 in Florida. Hurricane Ivan, a category 5 storm that killed 68 people in other countries in September 2004, passed through Cuba without one casualty after the evacuation of some 1.9 million people.

In contrast, Hurricane Katrina, also a category 5 storm, claimed the lives of nearly 1,700 people in the Gulf Coast region, according to the online version of the *Canadian Press*.

Damage caused by Gustav to buildings and infrastructure in Cuba, particularly in the western region where the storm was most intense, was substantial. Many homes, trees, roads, telephone poles, and electrical lines, were damaged or destroyed by the storm.

José Ramón Machado Ventura, first vice president of the Councils of State and Ministers of Cuba, recently pointed to improvements over previous years in the restoration of electricity to Havana. He expected power to be back up there by September 2 at the latest.

Reuters/ Claudia Daut

A man and his dog board a bus August 30 in Batabano, Cuba. The Cuban government organized the evacuation of 250,000 people from the western provinces in preparation for Hurricane Gustav. No lives were lost in the storm.

UK rulers move to cut back social safety net for workers

BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

EDINBURGH, Scotland—The Labour government in the United Kingdom announced a series of measures July 21 aimed at reducing welfare and unemployment payments. This change is the first in a raft of proposals attacking the social safety net for working people.

"There will be a very clear expectation that if there is work there people should take it, and sanctions to make sure that if they do not there will be consequences," said James Purnell, the government's work and pensions secretary.

The new measures were first proposed by a commission headed by former investment banker David Freud. The report was commissioned by former prime minister Anthony Blair.

Unemployed workers could have benefits stopped for up to six months if they do not "cooperate in looking for a job," said the London *Times*. To qualify for payments, anyone receiving unemployment benefits for more than two years will have to do jobs like cleaning parks, removing graffiti, or helping in nursing homes. Currently some 68,000 people have been on Jobseekers allowance for more than two years, 16,000 for more than five years. Those addicted to drugs will be refused welfare if they do not seek help. Single parents will be required to work when children reach the age of seven.

Starting October 27 new applications for disability or sickness benefits will be conditional upon government-appointed doctors confirming that applicants are unable to work any kind of job. Currently, if a person meets a threshold of incapacity to work in general, they are entitled to benefits.

All 2.6 million people receiving incapacity benefits today are to be reassessed. London aims to cut the numbers of those receiving these benefits by 1 million by 2015. Benefits for those looking for work are already £20 a week less than for those judged incapable of working, and are conditional on proof of job hunting. (£1=US$1.82)

The opposition Conservative Party backs the attacks, but says they don't go far enough. Conservative leader David Cameron wants the two-year limit on claiming unemployment benefits to be over a worker's lifetime.

The attacks come at a time when unemployment is rising. The number of people out of work increased 60,000 in the three months leading up to June, bringing the official unemployment rate to 5.4 percent.

To minimize resistance from the labor movement, the rulers have accompanied their drive by a sustained campaign to whip up resentment and divisions between employed and unemployed workers, scapegoat immigrants, and bolster the family.

"Labour blitz on dole scroungers," headlined an article in the *Sun*. The right-wing *Spectator* wrote that "welfare ghettos" are "spawning gang warfare and endemic criminality" and "are Petri dishes where social malaise festers. Mass immigration now makes it impossible to argue that there are not enough jobs in Britain."

David Cameron vowed to make Britain "more family-friendly." In a June speech to Relate, the largest provider of relationship counseling in the United Kingdom, he said that maintaining strong family relationships "is the way to reduce budget deficits" by "reducing the demands on the state caused by family breakdown."

James Purnell's proposals also pave the way for increased involvement of business and voluntary sectors. They already make £1.8 billion from such schemes. Businesses could bid to run programs, such as welfare-to-work schemes and projects to "rehabilitate" former prisoners.

THE MILITANT
online
www.themilitant.com

Moscow occupies Georgia

Continued from front page

was planned months in advance.

Ever since the breakup of the USSR in the early 1990s, when nations oppressed by the ruling bureaucracy in Moscow declared their independence, the KGB-led Russian government has sought ways to reassert its economic, political, and military power in the region. The invasion of Georgia is Moscow's first step toward doing that.

Georgia has historically been oppressed by Great Russian chauvinism, both under the tsar and under the rule of the privileged caste headed by Joseph Stalin that carried out a counterrevolution in the mid-1920s against the gains workers, peasants, and oppressed nationalities won with the October 1917 Russian Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin.

'Privileged influence'

On August 31 Medvedev indicated that Russian aggression will not stop at Georgia's border. He declared that Moscow has "regions of privileged interest" and will defend "the life and dignity" of Russian citizens "no matter where they are located." His remarks were seen as an open threat to Crimea, a province of Ukraine that is predominantly Russian, as well as Baltic states where there are also large concentrations of Russians.

Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko had earlier responded to the invasion of Georgia by saying he would no longer permit the Russian Black Sea Fleet to dock at the Crimean port of Sevastopol. After dissension in his government, he retreated to calling for an increase in the rent Moscow pays to lease the Sevastopol base.

On September 1 Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov proposed an embargo on arms sales to Georgia until its president, Mikhail Saakashvili, is forced out of office. Repeating the now discredited lie that Russia invaded Georgia to halt "genocide" against South Ossetians, Lavrov said Moscow would "continue measures to punish the guilty, so that this regime can no longer commit evil."

The Georgian government responded by breaking diplomatic relations with Moscow. It also withdrew from a 1994 cease-fire agreement in Abkhazia that allowed the presence of Russian "peacekeepers" in that region. In the course of its invasion of Georgia last month, Russia drove all remaining Georgian troops out of Abkhazia. The Abkhaz government announced Russia would represent it in foreign affairs.

According to Reuters, Russian troops continue to occupy towns outside the city of Gori, near Georgia's capital Tbilisi, and are not allowing residents who fled to return. Lado Vardzelshvili, governor of Gori, told Reuters that an estimated 28,000 Georgian refugees were still blocked from going home.

Thugs terrorize Georgians

In other parts of Georgia, meanwhile, Moscow-backed thugs continued to terrorize Georgian villagers under the cover of Moscow's "peacekeepers." The London *Times* reported that goons were burning down homes, looting, and beating and killing Georgian civilians in the "buffer zone" Russian troops established north of Gori. "They had no uniform—I think they were Ossetians," Siyala Sereteli told the *Times*, describing the attack on her village, Irganeteye. "They took everything they wanted, even the fans. They beat up a man using sticks and a chair and then threw him in the river."

A representative of the UN refugee agency UNHCR said that Russian checkpoints prevented anyone from entering the "buffer zone" to investigate the situation in the villages.

In western Georgia, Russian troops continued to occupy the port town of Poti and the surrounding area. Washington made a decision in late August to reroute the Coast Guard cutter *Dallas*, which was to have docked in Poti to deliver humanitarian aid. On August 27 the *Dallas* docked instead in Batumi, a port under Georgian control.

EU summit

A European Union (EU) summit September 1 condemned Moscow's "disproportionate response" in Georgia and said a delegation would travel soon to Russia to demand Moscow withdraw its troops to the positions they held before August 7.

The Russian foreign ministry released a statement welcoming the EU decisions. "There were calls from some states to impose sanctions on Russia and freeze relations," the statement said. "The main thing, however, is they are in the minority and the majority of EU countries have manifested a responsible approach."

Russia supplies more than 40 percent of Europe's gas imports and a third of its oil. Germany—Russia's largest EU trading partner—is particularly anxious to maintain relations with Moscow. Gerhard Schroeder, predecessor of current German chancellor Angela Merkel, is codirector of a joint venture with the Russian state-owned Gazprom to build a 750-mile pipeline to carry natural gas from Russia to Germany by 2011.

ON THE PICKET LINE

Machinists rally calls for strike against Boeing

About 7,000 members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) marched August 29 at Boeing's widebody jet plant in Everett, Washington, to reject the company's contract offer and call for a strike.

In response, the IAM officialdom announced that they were recommending the machinists reject Boeing's third and "final" contract offer. Unionists are voting on the pact September 3. If two-thirds of voters reject it, a strike would begin the following day. The union covers 26,000 workers in the Puget Sound region near Seattle, 1,500 in Portland, and about 800 in Wichita, Kansas.

According to IAM District president Tom Wroblewski, the contract would provide smaller wage increases to new hires than for more senior workers and would increase workers' health-care costs.

—Brian Williams

Eurostar train cleaners in London strike for higher wages

LONDON—Workers who clean the high speed Eurostar trains that connect London to Paris and Brussels conducted a 24-hour strike August 25. More than 120 unionists, members of the Rail Maritime and Transport union, are demanding that those who work for contractor OCS have their wage increased from £6.37 an hour to at least £7.20 (£1=$1.82). The workers were also demanding back pay, a pension plan, and sick pay. Unionists on the picket line chanted, "Fair pay and dignity at work" and "No more bullying."

—Filip Tedelund

Pennsylvania meeting counters rightist protest

Militant/Janet Post

SHENANDOAH, Pennsylvania, August 30—More than 100 people gathered at the Kehillat Israel Nondenominational Church for a unity meeting here today to support the family of Luis Ramírez and the immigrant community. Ramírez was beaten to death in July; three youth are charged with the killing.

Speakers included Shenandoah mayor Thomas O'Neill, representatives from the National Coalition of Latino Clergy, Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, and the Pennsylvania Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs.

Third from the right holding the flag is Ramírez's fiancée Crystal Dillman. At far left is Osborne Hart, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress in Pennsylvania's 2nd District. Hart is demanding justice for Ramírez, conviction of his attackers, and immediate legalization of all undocumented workers.

The meeting was called in response to an anti-immigrant demonstration organized here today by a rightist group called Voice of the People, which drew close to 200 participants.

—JANET POST

10th U.S. bank fails this year

BY DOUG NELSON

More banks are headed toward failure as a result of the deepening financial crisis of capitalism.

On August 29, Integrity Bank of Alpharetta, Georgia, became the 10th bank to collapse this year. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. (FDIC) stepped in to oversee a takeover by Regions Financial of Alabama of the failed bank's $1.1 billion in assets.

The FDIC is the government agency that functions to instill confidence in the U.S. financial system by insuring bank deposits, generally for up to $100,000 per deposit account. Insured banks pay premiums, which along with earnings from U.S. Treasury securities, are put into the agency's deposit insurance fund.

At the end of June, the fund stood at about $45 billion. Since then there have been six bank failures, including the July 11 collapse of IndyMac Bank, which had $32 billion in assets. The FDIC has paid out more than $6 billion from its fund so far to cover losses, according to Bloomberg news service.

117 'problem' banks

The FDIC maintains a list of banks in trouble, which has grown for the last seven consecutive quarters. From a historic low of 47 banks at the end of September 2006, the FDIC "problem list" at the end of June stood at 117 out of a total of about 8,500. While the number of "problem" banks was much higher in the early 1990s, reaching nearly 10 percent, there are many indications that what is happening now is the beginning of a more systemic problem, whose consequences will be devastating for working people.

Between April and June, 27 banks were added to the list. This included some larger institutions and brought the total assets of "problem" banks from $26.3 billion to $78.3 billion. The FDIC list gives only a partial picture, as conditions often change rapidly. IndyMac Bank, for example, was not on the list.

Banks are having a harder time raising capital and are more reluctant to lend as the credit market tightens. Nearly 18 percent of all banks were unprofitable in the second quarter. Net income of all banks at the end of June was the lowest second-quarter total since 1991.

Changes in other indicators over the last year illustrate the deepening problem in the banking system. Charge-offs of uncollectible loans and leases totaled $26.4 billion in the second quarter, nearly triple the amount it was during the same time last year. Much of this is related to the collapse of the U.S. housing market. Residential mortgage loans write-offs increased by 822 percent in one year. Charge-offs for real estate construction and land development loans rose 1,227 percent. One in every 171 households received a foreclosure filing during the second quarter, up by 121 percent from the previous year.

In the same period, the average rate of return on assets of U.S. banks dropped from 1.21 percent to 0.15 percent.

Banks have been shoring up their reserves in anticipation of more defaults. While the amount banks added to these "loan-loss provisions" quadrupled in one year, the reserves continue to slip further behind the rising sum of past-due loans.

In an August 22 column John Mauldin, head of an investment advisory firm, cited Chris Whalen, managing director of Institutional Risk Analytics, whose business is to analyze the "health" of banks and financial institutions. Whalen, he said, expects about 100 banks will fail over the next year with combined assets of $850 billion. If something like this happens, that portion that would be lost and have to be covered by the FDIC would likely exceed its funds by no small margin.

Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae

The deflation of mortgage giants Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae remains a major unsolved problem for the capitalists, and has been a big source of pressure on many banks. The two government-sponsored private companies hold or back $5.3 trillion of the $12 trillion total in outstanding U.S. home mortgages. Both lost more than 90 percent of their stock value within one year, and Moody's rating agency downgraded their preferred stock to near junk.

The White House moved to shore up the balance sheet of, and confidence in, the two firms by signing a housing bill July 30 that allowed the Treasury Department to extend them an unlimited line of credit and buy their stock.

Freddie and Fannie shares started rising during the last week of August, but then declined again at the end of the month with news that the Bank of China recently sold some 30 percent of its securities in the two companies.

JP Morgan Chase announced in late August it would write down some $600 million of its preferred shares in the companies. Other banks and insurance companies, which hold a total of some $35 billion in the mortgage firms' shares, are expected to do the same by the end of the third quarter.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

25 CENTS
THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

September 16, 1983

The United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization on August 24 adopted a resolution calling for an end to U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico.

Voting for the resolution were the delegations from Afghanistan, Bulgaria, the Congo, and Cuba. The representatives of the two imperialist countries on the committee, Australia and Norway, voted against. Abstaining were the Ivory Coast, Chile, Fiji, and India.

Whether the resolution, which was drafted by Cuba, Afghanistan, and Syria, will be considered by the UN General Assembly when it reopens September 20 remains to be seen. Last year, the U.S. delegation, through intensive arm-twisting, was able to defeat a Cuban-sponsored resolution to discuss Puerto Rico's status.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

September 15, 1958

Five New Jersey organizations denounced the House Un-American Activities Committee Sept. 6 and urged that its "investigations" of alleged Communist Activities cease. The five are the Rutgers Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, Newark Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, New Jersey Council of Americans for Democratic Action, Newark Local of AFL-CIO American Federation of Teachers and the New Jersey Region of the American Jewish Congress.

The five groups took the stand following Newark "hearings" by the Un-American Activities Committee from Sept. 3 to 5. Their statement characterized the "hearings" as marked by "prejudgment, one-sidedness, irresponsible charges and refusal to allow victims of attack and defamation the right to confront their accusers."

THE MILITANT
Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

September 16, 1933

The strongest sector of the nationwide strike of silk workers, its Paterson division of more than 25,000 men, holds firm. The tie-up in this city has closed every shop, the looms are idle and the workers have responded 100 percent solid to the strike call.

Men and women, of all nationalities, young and old, those who have never known the meaning of union organizations and veterans of class struggle, are banding side by side on the picket lines in huge, enthusiastic strike meetings displaying a spirit of militancy equaled only by the heroic battle of 1913.

The great virility of this struggle is vividly demonstrated by the pouring out of the mills of more than 15,000 dye workers who for the first time in 20 years have taken their stand on the picket line ready to see the fight to the end.

Stalinist counterrevolution and oppressed nations

Among Pathfinder's September Books of the Month is The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going? *Reprinted here is an excerpt from the section "Nationality and Culture." In October 1917 workers and peasants in Russia, led by the Bolshevik party, carried out a deep-going revolution. This classic study by Leon Trotsky, a central leader of that revolution, explains the degeneration of the revolution. It illuminates the roots of the disintegration of the bureaucracy and sharpening conflicts in and among the former republics of the USSR.* *Copyright © 1972 Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

BY LEON TROTSKY

The policy of Bolshevism on the national question, having ensured the victory of the October revolution, also helped the Soviet Union to hold out afterward notwithstanding inner centrifugal forces and a hostile environment. The bureaucratic degeneration of the state has rested like a millstone upon the national policy. It was upon the national question that Lenin intended to give his first battle to the bureaucracy, and especially to Stalin, at the 12th Congress of the party in the spring of 1923. But before the congress met Lenin had gone from the ranks. The documents which he then prepared remain even now suppressed by the censor.

Delegates to Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku, Azerbaijan, September 1920. It registered a new stage in the emancipation struggle of colonial and oppressed peoples.

The cultural demands of the nations aroused by the revolution require the widest possible autonomy. At the same time, industry can successfully develop only by subjecting all parts of the Union to a general centralized plan. But economy and culture are not separated by impermeable partitions. The tendencies of cultural autonomy and economic centralism come naturally from time to time into conflict. The contradiction between them is, however, far from irreconcilable. Although there can be no once-and for-all prepared formula to resolve the problem, still there is the resilient will of the interested masses themselves. Only their actual participation in the administration of their own destinies can at each new stage draw the necessary lines between the legitimate demands of economic centralism and the living gravitations of national culture. The trouble is, however, that the will of the population of the Soviet Union in all its national divisions is now wholly replaced by the will of a bureaucracy which approaches both economy and culture from the point of view of convenience of administration and the specific interests of the ruling stratum.

It is true that in the sphere of national policy, as in the sphere of economy, the Soviet bureaucracy still continues to carry out a certain part of the progressive work, although with immoderate overhead expenses. This is especially true of the backward nationalities of the Union, which must of necessity pass through a more or less prolonged period of borrowing, imitation and assimilation of what exists. The bureaucracy is laying down a bridge for them to the elementary benefits of bourgeois, and in part even pre-bourgeois, culture. In relation to many spheres and peoples, the Soviet power is to a considerable extent carrying out the historic work fulfilled by Peter I and his colleagues in relation to the old Muscovy, only on a larger scale and at a swifter tempo.

In the schools of the Union, lessons are taught at present in no less than eighty languages. For a majority of them, it was necessary to compose new alphabets, or to replace the extremely aristocratic Asiatic alphabets with the more democratic Latin. Newspapers are published in the same number of languages—papers which for the first time acquaint the peasants and nomad shepherds with the elementary ideas of human culture. Within the far-flung boundaries of the tzar's empire, a native industry is arising. The old semi-clan culture is being destroyed by the tractor. Together with literacy, scientific agriculture and medicine are coming into existence. It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of this work of raising up new human strata. Marx was right when he said that revolution is the locomotive of history.

But the most powerful locomotive cannot perform miracles. It cannot change the laws of space, and can only accelerate movement. The very necessity of acquainting tens of millions of grown-up people with the alphabet and the newspaper, or with the simple laws of hygiene, shows what a long road must be traveled before you can really pose the question of a new socialist culture. The press informs us, for example, that in western Siberia the Oirots who formerly did not know what a bath means, have now "in many villages baths to which they sometimes travel 30 kilometers to wash themselves." This extreme example, although taken at the lowest level of culture, nevertheless truthfully suggests the height of many other achievements, and that not only in the backward regions. When the head of a government, in order to illustrate the growth of culture, refers to the fact that in the collective farms a demand has arisen for "iron bedsteads, wall clocks, knit underwear, sweaters, bicycles, etc.," this only means that the well-off upper circles of the Soviet villages are beginning to use those articles of manufacture which were long ago in common use among the peasant masses of the West. From day to day, in speeches and in the press, lessons are pronounced on the theme of "cultured socialist trade." In the essence, it is a question of giving a clean attractive look to the government stores, supplying them with the necessary technical implements and a sufficient assortment of goods, not letting the apples rot, throwing in darning cotton with stockings, and teaching the selling clerk to be polite and attentive to the customer—in other words, acquiring the commonplace methods of capitalist trade. We are still far from solving this extremely important problem—in which, however, there is not a drop of socialism.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

September BOOKS OF THE MONTH

PATHFINDER READERS CLUB SPECIALS — 25% DISCOUNT

The Revolution Betrayed
by Leon Trotsky
This work by a central leader of the October Revolution explains why Stalinism was able to consolidate its power in the Soviet Union and examines the internal dynamics of the privileged caste led by Joseph Stalin.
$20. **Special price: $15**

The Origins of Materialism
by George Novack
$22. **Special price: $16.50**

Selected Speeches of Fidel Castro
by Fidel Castro
Castro explains why only a socialist revolution could bring about the profound changes Cuban working people had overthrown the Batista dictatorship to achieve.
$15. **Special price: $11.50**

Apartheid's Great Land Theft
by Ernest Harsch
$8. **Special price: $6**

Aldabonazo: En la clandestinidad revolucionaria cubana 1952–58
(Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban revolutionary underground 1952–58)
by Armando Hart
$26. **Special price: $19.50**

What Is Surrealism?
by André Breton
$40. **Special price: $30**

Join Pathfinder Readers Club for $10 and receive discounts all year long

ORDER ONLINE AT WWW.PATHFINDERPRESS.COM
OFFER GOOD UNTIL SEPTEMBER 30, 2008

IF YOU LIKE THIS PAPER, LOOK US UP

Where to find distributors of the *Militant*, *New International*, and a full display of Pathfinder books.

UNITED STATES

CALIFORNIA: Los Angeles: 2826 S. Vermont Ave. #9 Zip: 90007. Tel: (323) 737-2191. E-mail: laswp@sbcglobal.net **San Francisco:** 5482 Mission St. Zip: 94112-1015. Tel: (415) 584-2135. E-mail: swpsf @sbcglobal.net

FLORIDA: Miami: 6777 NW 7th Ave., Suite 5. Zip: 33150. Mailing address: P.O. Box 381395. Zip: 33238. Tel: (305) 757-8869. E-mail: swpmiami@att.net

GEORGIA: Atlanta: 2840 NE Expressway, Suite 102. Zip: 30345. Tel: (404) 471-1165. E-mail: swpatlanta@bellsouth.net **Carrollton:** 1109 S. Park St., Ste. 504 #148. Zip: 30117. Tel: 770-834-0420. E-mail: swpcarrollton@bellsouth.net

ILLINOIS: Chicago: 3557 S. Archer Ave. Zip: 60609. Tel: (773) 890-1190. E-mail: Chicagoswp@sbcglobal.net

IOWA: Des Moines: 3707 Douglas Ave. Zip: 50310. Tel: (515) 255-1707. E-mail: swpdesmoines@qwest.net

MASSACHUSETTS: Boston: 13 Bennington St., 2nd Floor, East Boston. Zip: 02128. Tel: (617) 569-9169. E-mail: swpboston@verizon.net

MINNESOTA: Minneapolis: 1311 1/2 E. Lake St. Zip: 55407. Tel: (612) 729-1205. E-mail: tcswp@qwest.net

NEW JERSEY: Newark: 168 Bloomfield Ave., 2nd Floor. Zip: 07104. Tel: (973) 481-0077. E-mail: swpnewark@optonline.net

NEW YORK: **Manhattan**: 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor. Zip: 10018. Tel: (212) 629-6649. E-mail: newyorkswp@mac.com

PENNSYLVANIA: Philadelphia: 188 W. Wyoming Ave. Zip: 19140. Tel: (215) 455-2682. E-mail: philaswp@verizon.net

TEXAS: Houston: 4800 W. 34th St., Suite C-51A. Zip: 77092. Tel: (713) 688-4919. E-mail: swp.houston1@ sbcglobal.net

WASHINGTON, D.C.: 3717 B Georgia Ave. NW, Ground Floor. Zip: 20010. Tel: (202) 536-5080. E-mail: swp.washingtondc@verizon.net

WASHINGTON: Seattle: 5418 Rainier Ave. South. Zip: 98118-2439. Tel: (206) 323-1755. E-mail: seattleswp@speakeasy.net

AUSTRALIA

Sydney: 1st Flr, 3/281-287 Beamish St., Campsie, NSW 2194. Mailing address: P.O. Box 164, Campsie, NSW 2194. Tel: (02) 9718 9698. E-mail: cl_australia@ optusnet.com.au

CANADA

QUEBEC: Montreal: 7105 St. Hubert, Suite 106F, H2S 2N1. Tel: (514) 272-5840. E-mail: cllc_can@bellnet.ca

FRANCE

Paris: P.O. 175, 23 rue Lecourbe. Postal code: 75015. Tel: (01) 40-10-28-37. E-mail: milpath.paris@laposte.net

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland: Suite 3, 7 Mason Ave., Otahuhu. Postal address: P.O. Box 3025. Tel: (9) 276-8885. E-mail: clauck@xtra.co.nz

SWEDEN

Stockholm: Bildhuggarvägen 17, 12144 Johanneshov. Tel: (08) 31 69 33. E-mail: kfstockholm@tele2.se

UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND: London: First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green (Entrance in Brick Lane). Postal code: E2 6DG. Tel: 020-7613-2466. E-mail: cllondon@onetel.com

SCOTLAND: Edinburgh: Second Floor, 105 Hanover St. Postal code: EH2 1DJ. Tel: 0131-226-2756. E-mail: cledinburgh@ talktalk.net

EDITORIAL

‘Five Stars and One Song’ concert

The front page ad of this week’s issue of the *Militant* urges a big turnout for the “Five Stars and One Song” concert at Hostos College in New York to help advance the fight to free Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero, five Cuban revolutionaries unjustly incarcerated in U.S. prisons for the past 10 years.

The event, sponsored by the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5, is a first of its kind in the United States for this campaign. It involves a number of well-known performing artists who are standing up to pressure in order to put on this concert. It is certain to attract a broad audience who will come to listen to top-flight musicians and to learn about the case of the Cuban Five.

The event should serve as an example of the type of activities that can be organized in the United States, and around the world, to expose and overturn the U.S. government frame-up of the Cuban Five. From Boston to Chicago to Houston and Los Angeles there are artists and others who will be willing to donate their time and energies to this just cause.

Readers of the *Militant* should also help to build attendance at the concert to counter the campaign by opponents of the Cuban Revolution who have tried to pressure musicians from performing there and others from participating. Many students, artists, and working people will not take kindly to being told what music they can listen to, or that they should close their minds to the truth about a U.S. government frame-up.

A complement to the concert in New York will be another important activity in defense of the Cuban Five—a march and rally in Washington, D.C., on September 13 demanding their release. Speakers there will feature Leonard Weinglass, attorney for the Cuban Five, and other leaders of their defense campaign.

Response to Hurricane Gustav

Continued from front page

Orleans will go “directly to the big house,” the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, Nagin said. He also announced that the National Guard and police force had been doubled.

“It’s like Katrina,” Eloise Williams, a retired health-care worker told the *Militant* by phone. We don’t know what we will be facing in the cities we are to be taken to.” Williams lives in the west bank Algiers section of the city with its smaller, older levee system that was likely to be breached by a direct hit from the storm.

A *New York Times* correspondent rode a bus that arrived at a shelter in Birmingham, Alabama, 12 hours after leaving New Orleans. The passengers, mostly workers, were never informed of their final destination. Once reaching the Birmingham shelter, they were not allowed to leave the bus for another hour, only to find the shelter was out of beds and food. Eventually more supplies arrived for the 1,200 people officials crammed into the facility designed for 500.

Howard Allen, a retired merchant seaman, remained with the few thousand who stayed in New Orleans. “I don’t have any money for expenses when I get there,” he said by phone.

Thousands from the coastal areas were crammed into shelters in northern and central Louisiana, as well as in Texas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama.

Only in the week leading up to Gustav’s landing did government officials admit how little rebuilding of the levee system had been done, and how vulnerable the city, especially its working-class neighborhoods, were to a storm. There are still 350 miles of repairs to levees and other flood-protection infrastructure to be completed. The *Los Angeles Times* reported September 1 that “Congress has authorized programs totaling almost $15 billion to upgrade the entire system by 2011. But that project is only 25% complete.”

Working people have fared no better on repairs to housing devastated by Katrina. Three years later, some 65,000 damaged buildings and empty lots remain. Rents, meanwhile, have shot up 46 percent.

By contrast, the French Quarter a popular business district has long been restored.

On August 29 a few days before Gustav touched down, several protests took place in the city, marking the third anniversary of Katrina. More than 100 people rallied in the Lower 9th Ward and marched to a city park. They protested the fact that most public schools remain closed, as does the city’s public hospital. Working people throughout the city face a housing crisis while city officials are on a campaign to eliminate public housing. Marchers also demanded that August 29—the date that Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans—become a state holiday. That afternoon another rally of close to 200 gathered near the B.W. Cooper public housing development, which the city is in the process of demolishing. Sam Jackson, a resident of the complex, called for affordable public housing for all who need it.

From there demonstrators marched through the city. They stopped at Charity Hospital, the only public hospital, and demanded it be reopened. They also held a speakout against police brutality at the Greyhound bus station, which was turned into a jail after Katrina filled up the city prison with water while prisoners were locked inside.

Relatives of two men killed by police on the Danziger Bridge in the days following Katrina spoke against the recent decision to drop the charges against seven cops who shot the unarmed men. Demonstrators also rallied with day laborers demanding an end to raids and deportations of undocumented workers. The protest ended at the Treme Community Center, a building that used to house a public school. Many schools throughout the city remain closed. Some that have reopened have been turned into “charter schools.”

Amanda Ulman contributed to this article.

LETTERS

Russia invades Georgia I

Your editorial on the Russian invasion of Georgia focuses on oppressed nationalities and the right of free self-determination. I believe it fails to recognize the role of the U.S. in ensuring a client state by way of pumping funds into Georgia to assert its own influence over the area. The *Militant* also fails to recognize the role played by the U.S. and NATO in arming Poland for obscure but certainly nefarious purposes. The Russians are not pumping money into Mexico to influence the outcome of elections there and to put missiles in that territory. Where is your internationalism?

S.C.
New York, New York

Russia invades Georgia II

The front-page article “Russian troops out of Georgia!” [in the September 1 issue] was so inspiring and to the point. I needed to say well done to the *Militant* and its volunteer staff for being right on the button. I am sure I am one of many who appreciate reading a paper that speaks to the needs of the international working class.

Chrissie Hodgkinson
London, United Kingdom

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Mississippi raid

Continued from front page

that the company would not release any more checks, regardless of identification. Several pickets reported that some U.S.-born workers coming out of the plant embraced them and expressed concern about what had happened.

The mass arrests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), make this the largest single worksite raid to date.

Most of those arrested are being held at the federal detention center in Jena, Louisiana. About 100 workers were released to care for small children or other family members. They must wear GPS ankle bracelets and cannot return to work or leave the state.

Eight workers were charged with identify theft and appeared August 27 in U.S. District Court in nearby Hattiesburg. They are being denied bond and face up to two years’ imprisonment and/or a $250,000 fine if convicted. The others arrested will start appearing in immigration court in Gulfport, Mississippi, on September 22.

“At 7 a.m., hundreds of armed ICE agents entered the plant. They had dogs. There were helicopters overhead. Everybody started running,” one young worker from Mexico told *Militant* reporters who visited a trailer park August 30. Displaying his ankle bracelet, he asked that his name not be used.

“They pushed everyone into a corner and separated the men and women. Then they divided us into ‘legals’ and ‘illegals,’ gave us different colored bracelets. The ‘legals’ were let out of the plant. After questioning us, most of the ‘illegals’ were pushed out of the plant onto waiting buses.” They were taken to the Jena detention center.

“Many [U.S.-born] workers in the plant laughed and applauded” when the ICE agents came in, he added. Other arrested workers also reported this.

This was not the universal reaction among U.S.-born workers in the area, however. A Black woman who has worked for many years at Peco Foods in Bay Springs said she opposed the deportation of immigrant workers. “Some of them are my friends,” she said. “I don’t think of them as Hispanics. They are my friends and I don’t want to see them sent back.”

The Howard Industries plants employ 4,300 workers, on three shifts, making transformers and other electrical equipment. Workers reported that it is hot, heavy, and dangerous work, with many on-the-job injuries. They described how the bosses promoted divisions between the U.S.-born workers, especially those who are Black, and immigrants, most of whom are from Mexico, Panama, Guatemala, and elsewhere in Latin America.

“When I asked why I couldn’t have a bottle of water on the line, like the other workers, the foreman told me ‘because you’re illegal,’” said Mayra Santiago Peña, a 28-year-old worker from Mexico.

The plant is organized by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

The impact of the raid is being felt throughout this rural part of southeastern Mississippi. Many immigrants have left the area. *Militant* reporters saw empty trailers and houses, and workers loading their pickups with their possessions. An older worker from Mexico employed at Southern Hens in nearby Mosell—one of the many chicken-processing plants in the area—said only five of his crew of 15 chicken catchers has been at work the past few days.

“Howard Industries is now hiring” proclaims a huge sign on one of the main roads in Laurel.

Our History Is Still Being Written
The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution
by Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong **$20**

www.pathfinderpress.com

In Denver, Calero says legalizing immigrants is life-or-death question

BY NAOMI CRAINE

DENVER, August 28—"I came here because we have to stick up for our community. We gave out flyers for this march at school, even though one of our teachers was telling people not to come," said Dominic Gonzales, a 14-year-old student from Westminster High School, who skipped classes to join a march for immigrant rights that took place during the final day of the Democratic Party National Convention here today.

He and his classmates were among many marchers here who welcomed the chance to meet Róger Calero, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president.

"My aunt works for the city and one of her coworkers was fired for trying to organize unions," Gonzales told the SWP candidate. "The unions need to be supporting this," Calero responded. "The fight for immediate legalization of all undocumented workers is a life-or-death question for the working class."

About 2,000 people joined the march and rally, which took place at two parks near the Democratic convention. It was called by a coalition of organizations that work in defense of immigrant rights. The main banner and printed placards for the march read, "We are America—Immigrant rights are human rights."

Many of the marchers came from Denver, as well as other parts of Colorado. A contingent of 50 immigrant rights activists, students, and workers came by van from the Los Angeles area. Some marchers had taken part in various other protests here this week directed at the Democratic convention.

The massive immigration raid earlier this week in Laurel, Mississippi, was on the minds of many. It got little mention from the stage, however, apart from a moment of silence for those who have died crossing the U.S.-Mexico border and for the 595 workers arrested in Laurel.

One woman marched with a sign that read, "Postville, Iowa—Presente." She now lives in Denver, but grew up near Postville, which was the site of another large raid at the Agriprocessors meatpacking plant in May.

"It's not a coincidence a lot of these raids have taken place at meatpacking plants," Calero told her. "That's where we are beginning to see resistance by workers, many of them immigrants, to the conditions the bosses have imposed over the last 20 years."

"I'm glad you said that, because I was wondering why these things are happening," she said.

Cesar Huanca, a Peruvian-born construction worker, said he was among 20 or 30 workers who came from the Centro Humanitario day laborer center. "Others were scared to come because of the police," he said. There has been a massive presence of federal and local cops, at the protests outside the Democratic convention.

Calero was interviewed by a number of reporters, including from the Univision television network and from the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Three people subscribed to the *Militant* at the march, 28 got single copies, and six picked up the pamphlet *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?*

Militant/Eric Simpson

Róger Calero, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. president, joined August 28 protest for legalization of undocumented workers outside Democratic Party convention in Denver.

McCain, Obama compete

Continued from page 3

his vice-presidential running mate.

Palin, 44, is the first woman named to a Republican presidential ticket. McCain describes Palin as a maverick like himself. She is put forward as someone who took on the oil companies to get more revenue for the people of Alaska, a fighter against corruption and "special interests," and someone who "knows what it's like to worry about mortgage payments and health care and the cost of gasoline and groceries," said McCain.

In her speech accepting McCain's offer to be on the ticket, Palin highlighted that her husband is an oil worker and "a proud member of the United Steelworkers union."

With McCain standing by her side, Palin saluted Sen. Hillary Clinton's failed run for the Democratic Party nomination. Repeating comments made by Clinton and Michelle Obama, Palin said, "Hillary left 18 million cracks in the highest, hardest glass ceiling in America."

Palin is also known for opposition to a woman's right to choose abortion—an issue that McCain has emphasized more and more—and flaunts her membership in the National Rifle Association. For a time she backed ultrarightist Patrick Buchanan's 2000 run for president.

Liberals' anti-worker bias

The selection of Palin drew howls of scorn from liberals who found it unbelievable that a mother of five would dare run for vice president. Article after article in the liberal capitalist press talks about her pregnant 17-year-old unmarried daughter and her daughter's "high-school dropout" boyfriend. The *New York Times* claims that the "revelation" that Palin's husband was arrested on drunk-driving charges 22 years ago "complicated the rollout" of her campaign.

In the midst of all this Biden joked that his "obvious difference" with Palin is that "she's good looking."

The reaction by the liberals exposes the anti-working-class arrogance and bias of the "progressive" Democratic Party. It is no better than the rightist positions Palin has promoted.

While basking in the boost that selecting Palin gave his campaign, McCain continued to hammer on the theme that Obama does not have the experience to be commander in chief and that Obama's proposed withdrawal from Iraq would weaken the efforts of U.S. imperialism around the world.

"Both candidates in the election pledge to end this war and bring our troops home," McCain told a Veterans of Foreign Wars convention August 18. "The great difference, the great difference, is that I intend to win it first."

Republicans scaled back the opening of their national convention September 1 in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, due to Hurricane Gustav; they wanted to avoid the bad taste left in the mouth of many working people due to the deadly lack of preparedness by both the Democrats and Republicans to Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

SWP presidential campaign tour schedule

Presidential candidate Róger Calero, center facing camera, speaks with participants in May Day rally in Los Angles demanding legalization of immigrants.

Vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy being interviewed by a Georgia TV station April 1 at a truckers' convoy in Atlanta protesting high fuel costs.

Presidential candidate Róger Calero

September 6
Madison, WI

September 7
Muscoda, WI

September 10–12
Atlanta

September 13–14
Washington, D.C.

Vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy

September 4–6
Philadelphia

September 7–10
Boston / Burlington, VT*

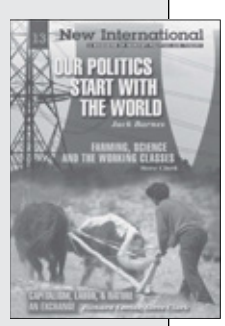
September 12–15
Newark, NJ

September 16–20
New York

September 23–26
Seattle

*filing for ballot status

Our Politics Start With the World
in New International no. 13
A magazine of Marxist politics and theory



"We are part of an international class that has no homeland. That's not a slogan. That's not a moral imperative. It is a recognition of the class reality of economic, social, and political life in the imperialist epoch." **—$14**

www.pathfinderpress.com
or from distributors listed on page 6

SWP senate candidate demands: Stop the raids!

The following statement was released September 3 in Carrollton, Georgia, by Eleanor García, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U. S. Senate, on the arrest of 595 immigrant workers in Laurel, Mississippi. García and campaign supporters joined those workers August 28 in a protest against the raid.

Drop the Charges, Free All Those Detained! Stop the Raids! Legalization for All Immigrants Now!

All charges of identity theft and of using false Social Security cards against the 595 immigrant workers at Howard Industries Inc. in Laurel, Mississippi, should be dropped immediately.

As Mayra Santiago Peña, an arrested worker, stated, "We're here to work, we've done nothing wrong."

The bosses at Howard Industries Inc. work hard to divide workers in the plant. They tell immigrant workers that Blacks are lazy, they tell Black and white workers that immigrants are stealing their jobs. Several of those arrested said that some of their coworkers applauded as they were forcibly taken out by the immigration cops.

Any divisions and discriminatory treatment that the bosses are successful in creating among workers weakens our class and our ability to fight effectively together against speedup, unsafe working conditions, and low wages. The bosses want to keep us from uniting together to fight to better our conditions on and off the job. As the economic crisis worsens and more native-born workers lose their homes, the message is "well, at least you're lucky—you're not an immigrant."

For the U.S. rulers the purpose of the raids are to intimidate workers from fighting, not to deport all immigrant labor, which they desperately need to maintain their competitive edge against their imperialist rivals. The raids, criminal charges of identity theft, police harassment, and deportations of immigrants are an attack on the entire working class. These attacks go hand in hand with new measures to give the FBI, the U.S. armed forces, and local cop agencies more freedom in spying on and disrupting unions, Black rights organizations, working-class political parties, and all those who refuse to go along with the injustices, indignities, and dehumanizing effects of capitalism.

They will expand the use of illegal entry and eavesdropping that were used in framing Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero, five Cuban revolutionaries who have been unjustly held in U.S. jails for 10 years. These methods will be used against a broader layer of workers as we organize to defend our standard of living and hard fought for social gains like Social Security and Medicare.

Militant/John Benson

Workers who were arrested during raid in Laurel, Mississippi, display their tracking bracelets in protest outside Howard Industries August 28.

The working-class has been strengthened and has won more fighting space by the massive May Day mobilizations of millions for legalization of immigrant workers over the past two years. These workers are part of a small but important vanguard that is developing in experience and fighting capacity in the battles for unionization and better working conditions in plants across the country. We must reject the bosses divide and rule strategy by refusing to let them divide us. We must reject their attempts to convince us that there are "American" jobs.

Workers need to stand together to fight for higher wages and better working conditions no matter what side of the border we happen to have been born on. This is the road to building a fighting trade union movement.

Join my campaign in demanding:

Drop all charges and free all those detained!

Stop the raids, legalization for all immigrants now!

Socialists win spot on Minnesota ballot

Continued from front page

ballot in eight states so far.

Kennedy filed 2,450 signatures August 28 with the Minnesota Secretary of State to gain ballot status.

During her campaign stop Kennedy was interviewed by KFAI radio station reporter Todd Melby, who asked what her campaign was doing differently. Kennedy pointed to her recent trip to New Orleans where "much of the working class areas haven't been rebuilt. They still look like the aftermath of the hurricane while downtown New Orleans has been totally rebuilt," she stated. Calero and I, she added, "would implement a public works program putting millions to work at union-scale wages and build safe levees and bridges that do not collapse."

A high point of the tour was meeting workers outside the Dakota Premium Foods plant in South St. Paul. Over the course of last year, workers there won a new contract after defeating a company effort to get rid of the union.

Kennedy talked to workers about the immigration raid in Mississippi, which many of them had not heard about. One worker, who said that workers have to keep fighting these raids and attacks, commented, "Let's see if Obama gets us something." Kennedy explained that Obama and McCain have similar positions on immigration.

Kennedy discussed with workers what was going on in the plant now. She shared some of her experiences in the struggle by coal miners, who were fighting for a union at the Co-Op mine in Utah where she had worked at the time. In that battle, led by Mexican immigrant miners, the fight for legalization was a central issue.

Several workers from the plant attended a campaign forum and social event so they could continue these discussions.

Kennedy's tour coincided with the opening of the Republican National Convention in St. Paul. On September 1 more than 10,000 demonstrated under the slogans of "U.S. Out of Iraq Now, Money for human needs not war, Demand peace, justice and equality," and "Say no to the Republican agenda." It was the first of several days of protest activities. Hundreds of campaign flyers were distributed and more than 100 single copies and 11 new subscriptions to the *Militant* sold. Many demonstrators, including youth and others sporting Obama buttons, appreciated Kennedy's explanation of how Obama and McCain are supporters of Washington's wars, including in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

One woman at the protest was from Louisville, Kentucky, where Kennedy herself had been involved in a successful fight to desegregate the schools in the 1970s. She told Kennedy that rulings to desegregate the schools have been overturned and today "the schools are segregated and terrible." Kennedy said that schools are getting more segregated by race and class and pointed to New Orleans "where there are only five public schools in the city that are open."

Nathan Sherer, a community college student, came to get his photo taken with the socialist candidate. He said he's for Kennedy's campaign so that "the rich don't keep getting richer and the poor getting poorer."

Kennedy spoke with Gerry Mischke, a graphic artist, about the need for workers to have their own political party. He told Kennedy of his experiences at a local newspaper. In response to changed work hours, workers in the department where he was employed organized and won a union. After a year of negotiations the company closed the department and outsourced their jobs.

Kennedy was interviewed by Fox News, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, the UK-based *Guardian* newspaper, and reporters from Chinese and Hungarian news agencies.

"Why are you running in the election?" asked the reporter from Fox News. Kennedy, said, "I am running in this election because I am a worker and I do not think that the Democratic and Republican parties represent the working class."

"We are the only presidential candidates in this election who call for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and any other country where there are U.S. troops."

"Immediate withdrawal?" asked the reporter.

"Yes, immediate withdrawal," replied Kennedy. "These wars are fought to protect the right of the U.S. rulers to exploit and plunder the world. McCain and Obama are for the escalation of the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. These wars are not in the interests of workers in these countries or in the United States."

"Calero and I are also for the immediate legalization of all undocumented workers with no conditions," Kennedy added. "We oppose the brutal ICE raid that just took place in Mississippi."

Get the Socialist Workers Campaign on the Ballot!

STATE	STATUS
NEW YORK	PETITIONS FILED
NEW JERSEY	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
WASHINGTON	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
VERMONT	PETITIONING COMPLETED
MINNESOTA	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
LOUISIANA	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
FLORIDA	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
DELAWARE	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
COLORADO	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
IOWA	✓ ON THE BALLOT!